VZCZCXYZ0018
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHAM #8495/01 3231534
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 191534Z NOV 06
FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5635
INFO RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY 0160
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 0462
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 4143
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 2503
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 2749
RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA PRIORITY 0327
RUEHKU/AMEMBASSY KUWAIT PRIORITY 0692
RUEHMK/AMEMBASSY MANAMA PRIORITY 0581
RUEHMS/AMEMBASSY MUSCAT PRIORITY 0429
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY 0343
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 1682
RUEHYN/AMEMBASSY SANAA PRIORITY 0534
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 0948

C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 008495

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR S/CT, NEA, DS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/18/2016
TAGS: PTER PREL JO
SUBJECT: MIDDLE EAST REGIONAL BIOMETRIC CONFERENCE OUTCOMES

REF: A. STATE 186216
     ¶B. STATE 175052

Classified By: Classified by Ambassador David Hale for reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The November 7-8 Jordanian-hosted regional
biometric conference was a significant success. All fourteen
Middle East countries invited by Jordan attended, represented
mostly by Interior Ministry officials. A number of
participants told the U.S. delegation that this was the first
time they discussed regional fingerprint sharing as a way to
combat terrorism. Jordanian and USG reps gave formal
presentations, but over half of the attendees gave informal
presentations on their domestic fingerprint collection
capabilities and experiences. Attendees confirmed that all
fourteen governments collect fingerprint data for criminals
and terrorists, and all maintain automated fingerprint
database systems, i.e., AFIS. However, they only share
biometric data with each other on an ad hoc basis. Under the
strong direction of Jordan's GID Deputy Director,
participants agreed to support more formal regional biometric
sharing, including creation of a regional database for
terrorist fingerprints, and agreed to Jordan,s offer to host
a follow-up meeting in 2007. As a more immediate action,
Jordan requested USG technical help on how to set up such a
database, and advice on what a regional biometric
data-sharing MOU should look like. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The GOJ hosted the "Middle East Regional Fingerprint"
conference at the Dead Sea November 7-8, intended to spur
regional discussion on using fingerprint collection to more
effectively target the transit of terrorists and foreign
fighters. Jordan's GID hosted the conference on the
recommendation of the USG, an initiative that came out of the
March 7-8, 2006 conference in Kuwait of U.S. COM's and others
convened by Coordinator for Counter Terrorism Ambassador
Henry Crumpton. The conference, funded with S/CT,s "CT
engagement" funds, was attended primarily by Interior
Ministry officials, and in some cases by National Police and
border control officials, from Jordan, Algeria, Bahrain,
Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Saudi Arabia,
Tunisia, Turkey, and the UAE, as well as experts from the USG
(State/S/CT, DHS, FBI/CJIS, and FBI) and Interpol. A full

list of individual attendees is available from Embassy Amman or S/CT.

¶3. (SBU) Brigadier General Ahmad Al-Sarayrah, Technical Director of the Jordanian General Intelligence Directorate, opened the conference by laying out explicitly the GOJ's goals for the conference: Not only facilitating informal regional discussion of fingerprint collection techniques and case studies, but seeking support for more formal regional sharing of fingerprints of known and suspected terrorists, based on regionally-agreed collection standards. Al-Sarayrah underscored that such cooperation would contribute directly to improving regional security and stability. Jordanian GID and PSD officials then gave detailed presentations outlining the history of fingerprint collection and identification techniques as a law enforcement tool; describing Jordan's comparatively advanced national fingerprint collection system, capabilities and practices; explaining the recent history of Jordan's cooperation with the EU on fingerprint collection training; offering a case study of how the GOJ used fingerprints to catch the terrorists involved in the November 2005 Amman hotel bombings; calling for standardized regional fingerprint sharing; and offering to host a regional website/database for terrorist fingerprint sharing and cooperation. Note: Post is encouraging the GOJ to circulate to attendees all of the presentation slides. End note.

¶4. (SBU) USG representatives Brad Wing (DHS/US-VISIT) and James Loudermilk (FBI) offered presentations on the history of U.S. fingerprint collection efforts; a briefing on the USG,s current IAFIS system and how it offers an integrated interagency and regional (within the U.S.) access to biometric and border control information; offering a case study of bilateral U.S.-Mexican fingerprint sharing; and suggestions for how to merge and connect existing systems. They were followed by the Head of Interpol's Fingerprint Unit, Mark Branchflower, who explained how Interpol,s fingerprint collection and sharing arrangements work. Interpol is willing to assist member states in seeking fingerprint identification from other member states on an ad hoc basis, and offered technical advice on Interpol's fingerprint collection, storage, and transmission standards, encouraging adoption by countries in the region of current international standards.

¶5. (SBU) At Jordan's request, representatives from Egypt, Algeria, the UAE, Iraq, Lebanon, and Morocco offered informal briefings on their domestic fingerprint collection capabilities and practices. The presentations and follow-up discussions revealed that all participating governments have automated fingerprint identification systems (AFIS), and some degree of capability to send and receive fingerprint information by email or virtual private network. However, there is a wide range of domestic policies and practices among participating governments on whom they collect fingerprints from. Some collect fingerprints from all nationals, some collect fingerprints only from convicted criminals, and most but not all collect from all travelers entering the country. Discussions also revealed a wide range of national collection capabilities, with countries such as Jordan and the UAE implementing advanced systems, while others, such as Yemen, relying on a more rudimentary (and under-funded) system and facing significant gaps in fingerprint coverage at ports of entry. The Jordanian GID Deputy Director proposed that as one aspect of closer regional fingerprint cooperation, the participating states assess what additional training and/or equipment they need to effectively contribute to a regional fingerprint database.

¶6. (SBU) Meeting conclusions: Delegations welcomed the presentations, thanked Jordan for hosting the conference, and agreed in principle on the need for more formal regional fingerprint-sharing mechanisms. Representatives from Iraq, Kuwait, Egypt, Algeria, and Morocco specifically welcomed the GOJ's offer to host a regional database/website for terrorist fingerprint sharing. Delegation representatives welcomed Jordan's offer to host a follow-up conference in six-to-eight

months. GOJ officials circulated a proposed summary of
conclusions for the meeting, which was adopted by consensus.
The text of the summary of conclusions is as follows:

-- The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan hosted a conference on
November 7-8, 2006, on regional Middle East fingerprint
collection and sharing.

-- Representatives of the Governments of Jordan, Algeria,
Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Saudi
Arabia, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United
States of America, and Yemen, and of Interpol, participated
actively. All participants welcomed the Kingdom of Jordan's
leadership and hospitality in hosting the conference.

-- Participants gave presentations on fingerprint technology,
Jordan's national biometric system, U.S., European, and
Interpol fingerprint initiatives, merging and connecting
existing systems, case studies using fingerprints to capture
terrorists, international standards for fingerprint exchange,
and Jordan,s collaboration website.

-- All participating states have automated fingerprint
identification systems (AFIS), and already share fingerprint
information on a case-by-case basis with Interpol and with
other regional states.

-- Participating states agreed that deepening
fingerprint-sharing cooperation on a bilateral level and
exploring such cooperation on a regional level would help the
states of the region combat terrorism and international crime
more effectively, and would contribute to more secure
borders.
-- The Jordanian government has made an initiative for
cooperation between the countries of the region to set
unified standards for fingerprint data exchange, and the
delegates accepted the Jordanian initiative. They agreed to
study it and submit their proposals to implement the
initiative.

-- The Jordanian government has offered to host another
conference on fingerprints in the Middle East in 2007. The
proposals submitted by countries will be discussed, as well
as standards and formats of exchanging fingerprint data
between countries, and studying countries' training and
system needs. End text.

¶7. (C) Jordanian requests: The GOJ is eager to continue
taking the regional lead on this issue, and looks to the USG
to continue quietly providing necessary technical, financial,
and substantive support to ensure this initiative's success.
As four examples of near-term follow-up help requested by the
GOJ, the GID Deputy Director asked if the USG could provide
the GOJ with (1) a model "regional biometric
information-sharing MOU" that Jordan could share with
participants, (2) technical assistance (e.g., from FBI) prior
to the next biometric conference to help the GOJ set up a
website/database, (3) bilateral assistance to those regional
countries (e.g., Yemen) most in need of capacity-building to
help ensure their effective participation in a future
regional database, and (4) consider sharing the USG's own
biometric data on regional terrorists, for example on
terrorists detained in Iraq, to help populate the future
regional database. USG delegation representatives agreed to
take the GOJ requests back to Washington for priority
consideration.

¶8. (C) Comment: Embassy Amman and the U.S. delegation to the
conference agree that the conference exceeded USG
expectations, thanks in large part to the GOJ's active
leadership. The conference outcomes offer the potential for
significant regional cooperation in combating terrorism, as
well as a potential template for regional cooperation on
other aspects related to the war on terror (e.g., combating
extremist ideology). Translating the agreement in principle
of the 14 participating states to share terrorist fingerprint
data regionally into concrete, effective cooperation will
require concerted follow-up, both from Washington and from

regional country teams working with participating
governments. End comment.

Visit Amman's Classified Web Site at
http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/amman/
HALE